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I. UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, HELD AT UNESCO HEADQUARTERS FROM 26 TO 29 APRIL 1993

The Thirty-second United Nations Seminar on the Question of Palestine, with the theme "Assistance to the Palestinian people", was held in Paris at UNESCO headquarters from 26 to 29 April 1993 in response to General Assembly resolution 47/170 of 22 December 1992.

The Seminar sought to promote an exchange of views and a sharing of experience on various aspects of assistance to the Palestinian people among various members of the international community. A report of the Seminar will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and also to the General Assembly.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising: H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation, who acted as Seminar Chairman; H.E. Mr. Alcibiades J. Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee and of the Seminar; H.E. Mr. Victor Camilleri (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee and Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Seminar; and Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

At the opening session, a statement was made on behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO by Mr. K. Nhouyvanisvong, Assistant Director-General for External Relations, ad interim. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read out by his representative, Mr. Hassen M. Fodha, Director of the United Nations Information Centre, Paris. Statements were also made by Mr. Ahmed Abu Ala, Director-General of the Department of Economic Affairs and Planning of the Palestine Liberation Organization and by the Chairman of the Committee.

A total of eight meetings were held. Representatives of 67 Governments, 17 United Nations bodies, organs and programmes, as well as 15 experts, accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in the Seminar, as did 19 NGOs as observers.

At the final session, the Rapporteur introduced a preliminary report summarizing the issues raised and a number of concluding points drawn from the discussions at the Seminar, which are reproduced below.

The topics addressed and the panelists were as follows:

Assistance to the Palestinian people - priorities and needs

(a) Programme for development of the Palestinian national economy for the years 1994-2000

Keynote speaker: Mr. Yusif Sayigh (Palestinian)
Coordinator, team leader and editor of the Programme

(b) The present situation in the occupied Palestinian territory

Experts: Mr. Mahmoud Okashah (Palestinian)
Economist, Gaza

Mr. Mohamed Shtayyeh (Palestinian)
Economist, Bir Zeit University, West Bank

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The role and experience of the United Nations system

Statements by United Nations system organizations:

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

International Labour Organisation

United Nations Centre for Human Rights

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

United Nations Population Fund

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

World Bank

World Health Organization

Expert: Mr. Samir Abdullah Saleh (Palestinian)
Economist, Bir Zeit University, West Bank

The role and experience of regional organizations

Statement by representative of the Commission of the European Communities

Experts: Mrs. Roselyne Bachelot (France)
Member, National Assembly

Mr. Jean-Michel Dumont (Belgium)
Secretary-General, Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation

Mrs. Ingbritt Irhammar (Sweden)
Member of Parliament, Riksdagen

The role and experience of countries involved in assistance projects in the occupied Palestinian territory

Statements by representatives of donor countries:

Sweden
Spain
Italy
France

Experts: Mr. Ibrahim Dakkak (Palestinian)
Development consultant

Mrs. Sarah Roy (United States of America)
Research associate, Harvard University

Mrs. Suzette Verhoeven (Belgium)
Senator

The role and experience of Palestinian and international non-governmental organizations

Experts: Mr. Khaled Haidar Abdel Shafi (Palestinian)
Economist, Gaza

Mr. Fritz Fröhlich (Austria)
Representative of Society for Austro-Arab Relations
Representative of Network of European NGOs
in the Occupied Territories

Mr. Paul E. Hoffman (Germany)
Berliner Missionswerk; Representative of the European
Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

Mr. Muath Nabulsi (Palestinian)
Palestinian Chamber of Commerce, Nablus, West Bank

Mr. Yousef Mahmoud Najem (Palestinian)
Palestinian Chamber of Commerce, Gaza Strip

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CONCLUDING POINTS

In the course of the deliberations the following points were highlighted:

"Participants commended the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for convening the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian people at a time of great importance for their future. They expressed their firm desire to make a concrete and useful contribution to helping the Palestinian people exercise its right to self-determination and development and to achieve a just peace. They considered that the wide and constructive participation in the Seminar by Governments, United Nations system organizations and agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies, had greatly contributed to its success.

"It was felt that the Seminar had been useful in identifying the nature and extent of existing assistance programmes. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts already made by Governments, intergovernmental and regional organizations, United Nations system organizations and agencies as well as NGOs in this regard, and for their readiness to continue and increase their financial and technical assistance in the fields of emergency, relief and development programmes.

"It was also felt that the Seminar had been useful for discussing the current and future needs of the Palestinian people, as articulated by the Palestinian representatives themselves, and for highlighting the importance of continued and increased assistance to the Palestinian people by the international community as a whole. Appreciation was expressed for the opportunity offered by the Seminar for a candid and constructive analysis of the experience of various donors and United Nations system organizations and agencies and of the problems encountered on the ground.

"Deliberations showed a growing expectation by the international community that a threshold had been reached in the long history of the Palestine question, and that the Palestinian people would soon be able to take charge of its own future and to exercise its economic, as well as political decision-making. Participants were of the view that a comprehensive Palestinian national development plan would be a major factor in achieving the independent development of the Palestinian people. They felt the need for undertaking coordination between various donors and United Nations system organizations and agencies, and the Palestinian central authority. In this connection they welcomed the introduction of the Palestine Development Programme prepared by the Department of Economic Affairs and Planning of the PLO and the explanations given about it.

"Serious concern was expressed about the grave and deteriorating economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory in consequence of recent developments. Participants underlined that Israeli policies were principally responsible for the current situation. Israel, the occupying Power, had an obligation to respect the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Security Council resolutions, and international human rights instruments which it had ratified.

"It was pointed out that the Israeli economic policy towards the occupied Palestinian territory had resulted in its underdevelopment and dependence on the Israeli economy. It was also stated that Israel had used its control over the occupied territory to prevent, or put obstacles in the way of, assistance projects aimed at promoting the independent development of the Palestinian people.

"Participants called on the international community as a whole to press Israel to lift the current siege in the occupied territory; to remove all barriers to development; and to permit the free operation on the ground of United Nations system organizations and agencies, and others delivering assistance to the Palestinian people.

"Participants were of the view that the international assistance programmes would be enhanced by greater and more effective coordination among United Nations system organizations and agencies and between them and other donors, and by elaboration of an overall strategy framework to guide their work.

"Participants discussed various courses of action that should be followed by the international community in order to make its contribution more effective. The view was expressed that international assistance should be targeted and delivered so as to meet Palestinian priorities, and to help loosen the grip of the occupation and to promote the independent development of the Palestinian people. It was noted with appreciation that certain Governments and organizations had been successful in delivering their assistance outside of Israeli control.

"The Seminar participants noted the experience of various organizations in the area of coordination and suggestions as to possible mechanisms made by speakers. There was general agreement that this question needed urgently to be discussed further at an appropriate level by all concerned in order to develop ways of using the limited resources of the international community as efficiently as possible. The Committee was therefore asked to recommend to the United Nations Secretary-General to convene a meeting of representatives of United Nations system organizations and agencies, together with PLO officials, to consider appropriate mechanisms to coordinate and channel assistance, and to decide on priorities.

"Participants called for urgent action by the international community to meet the emergency needs of the Palestinian people living under occupation and identified a number of specific areas requiring such action, particularly in the Gaza Strip, as the current grave conditions threatened to exacerbate tension and violence in the area.

"It was also stressed that significant assistance projects that could help promote Palestinian development could and should be undertaken immediately, particularly in areas relating to development of production, employment generation, and training, in light of the strategies and priorities established in the PDP as explained in the course of the seminar. A call was made for increased assistance by the international community in order to enable the Palestinian people to achieve self-determination and self-reliance and thereby promote a just peace in the region."

II. UNRWA COMMISSIONER-GENERAL WARNS DONORS OF CUTS IN SERVICES AND ADVISES ARAB LEAGUE OF FINANCIAL EMERGENCY

The following press release was issued by UNRWA on 2 April 1993:

"The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Ilter Türkmen, today urged donor Governments to increase their 1993 contributions to the Agency. Speaking at a specially convened meeting today, Mr. Türkmen said UNRWA would be 'forced to begin reducing some services beginning on 1 July unless additional funds are forthcoming'. The Agency faces a $28.5 million deficit in its regular and emergency programmes for 1993.

"'The UNRWA's emergency programmes are now more important than ever, both in the occupied territory and in Lebanon,' Mr. Türkmen said. In the four-month period between 1 December 1992 and 31 March, 57 Palestinian fatalities were recorded in the Gaza Strip. Over 2,100 intifadah-related injuries in Gaza were treated in UNRWA clinics or local hospitals, and 414 children under age sixteen were injured by gunfire. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have no access to government services and some 30,000 are homeless.

"The Commissioner-General said that due to the closure of the Gaza Strip on 28 March and the West Bank on 30 March by the Israeli authorities, Palestinian labourers were now unable to earn an income by working in Israel. He pointed out that if the closure continued, the Agency would have no alternative but to respond with emergency food assistance to Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"Mr. Türkmen said that while UNRWA's task was humanitarian, any cuts in Agency services to Palestine refugees might have political repercussions. Unless additional funding was forthcoming, UNRWA schools -- which average 50 pupils per class -- will be forced to increase class sizes, assistance to the most destitute families will have to be frozen at present levels and the quality of medical care and the hospitalization programme will be severely affected.

"During the meeting, the Canadian Government announced a $Can 500,000 pledge for UNRWA's emergency programme.

"The Commissioner-General reported that he had recently completed trips to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain to seek additional funding from Gulf countries.

"The special meeting was convened by Marcel Tremeau, Chairman of UNRWA's Advisory Commission and Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations Office at Vienna. 'The urgent situation caused by UNRWA's financial deficit has prompted this initiative,' said Mr. Tremeau. He asked Governments to re-examine their own financial commitments to UNRWA's budget, adding: 'Governments should recognize that increased contributions would help both the Agency and the Palestine refugees who rely on UNRWA's assistance.'" (see PAL/1794)

On 19 April 1993, UNRWA issued a further press release on the same subject:

"The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Ilter Türkmen, today warned that 'the rapidly growing hardship of Palestinians in the occupied territory may soon surpass UNRWA's financial ability to respond'. Speaking in Cairo at a special session of the Council of Ministers of the League of Arab States, Mr. Türkmen called upon Arab countries to provide greater financial support to the United Nations Agency responsible for providing services to more than 2.7 million Palestine refugees in the Middle East.

"Even prior to the Israeli-ordered sealing of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in late March, which Mr. Türkmen described as 'economic asphyxiation', UNRWA was facing a budget deficit of $28.5 million and confronting the possibility of having to cut services if additional funds were not made available. Today, tens of thousands of Palestinian workers are idle, prevented by the closure from going to work in Israel. Wage losses to the Gaza Strip alone are estimated at $750,000 per day.

"The local economies of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have also been disrupted by the closure and movement restrictions leading to millions of dollars of losses in agriculture, industry, transport and commerce. Unemployment was at least 40 per cent in the Gaza Strip and about 25 per cent in the West Bank prior to the sealing. If, as expected, new regulations and stricter monitoring are enacted to reduce the number of Palestinian labourers allowed to work in Israel, much of the responsibility for addressing the human cost will fall on UNRWA.

"Interviews by UNRWA with Palestinians in Gaza Strip refugee camps indicate that some families have been forced to liquidate possessions to generate cash to buy food because their savings are depleted. Local businesses have laid off large numbers of workers because they have no access to raw material and consumer demand has fallen. Agricultural products intended for the West Bank or external markets are being dumped locally, causing prices to fall

between 50 per cent and 90 per cent. In the West Bank, merchants report that consumer purchases of fruits have dropped by 80 per cent, eggs by 50 per cent and red meat by 60 per cent.

"Mr. Türkmen explained that 'steadily deteriorating economic conditions of Palestinians in the occupied territory as well as in Lebanon have pushed people who did not in the past depend on UNRWA services to turn to the Agency for basic support'.

"UNRWA provides basic health care, education and relief and social services to Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. UNRWA's 118 health clinics receive 6 million patient visits annually; 641 schools provide education to over 350,000 pupils; 5,000 students attend UNRWA vocational training centres; and 180,000 persons are registered with UNRWA's special hardship programme, which provides food rations to the poorest refugees. UNRWA previously announced that it could be forced to begin reducing some services beginning 1 July 1993, unless additional funds were received." (see PAL/1795)

III. UNITED NATIONS SPONSORS JOURNALISTS' ENCOUNTER IN ATHENS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

On 27 and 28 April 1993, the United Nations Department of Public Information held a journalists' encounter in Athens co-sponsored by the Government of Greece. The theme of the encounter was entitled, "Jerusalem: Visions of Reconciliation".

The event was one in a series mandated by General Assembly resolution 47/64 C of 11 December 1992. Each encounter seeks to bring together prominent media representatives from Europe or North America with Israeli, Palestinian and other Middle East experts to engage in informal, frank discussion and promote better understanding of the question of Palestine, including its Jerusalem dimension.

Accordingly, before an audience of Greek journalists and political experts, the issue of sovereignty over Jerusalem and associated municipal responsibilities was taken up within the context of international legality as embodied in United Nations resolutions.

The meetings were attended by some 60 representatives of Greek media organizations as well as 20 experts and members of the diplomatic corps.

The panelists were: Albert Aghazarian, director of public relations, Bir Zeit University; Moshe Amirav, member of the Jerusalem City Council; Yael Dayan, Member of the Knesset; Robert V. Keeley, President of the Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., and former United States Ambassador to Greece; Valery I. Kuzmin, Head of the Israel and Palestine Section, Middle East Department, Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation; Ruth Lapidoth, Professor of International Law, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Sami Musallam, Director of the Office of the President of the Palestine Liberation Organization; Sari Nusseibeh, member of the Steering Committee of the Palestinian Negotiating Team of Jerusalem; Hanna Seniora, publisher of Al Fair, Jerusalem; Idith Zertal, columnist, Haaretz Network, Israel; and Nicolas Galanopoulos, Foreign Ministry of Greece.

At the opening meeting on 27 April, Michael Papaconstantinou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that Greece, whose position had always been based on the principle of self-determination for Palestinians and territorial security for Israel, would contribute more actively to peacemaking initiatives in the Middle East in the course of its forthcoming presidency of the European Community to begin in January 1994.

In concluding remarks, Mr. Keeley summarized some of the points made during the discussion. In particular he stressed: inclusive and not exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem; no physical division of the city and open access to the holy sites; democratic approval of a final settlement by the city's inhabitants; and, the granting of more administrative rights to the Arab population.

IV. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION

A. Preparatory meeting of NGOs recommends programme for International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium

A preparatory meeting for the Tenth International NGO Meeting and the Seventh European NGO Symposium took place at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 5 and 6 April 1993. The meeting was attended by all the members of the International and the European Coordinating Committees for NGOs. The provisional programmes recommended by the preparatory meeting, and later adopted by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, are as follows:

1. SEVENTH UNITED NATIONS EUROPEAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Geneva or Vienna
23-24 August 1993

Theme: "The Middle East peace process; Palestinian rights and development - a challenge to Europe"

Provisional programme

Monday, 23 August

8 a.m. - 9.30 a.m.	Registration
9.30 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.	Opening session
	Statements by:
	Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

	Representative of Palestine
	Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP)
11.30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Plenary session
	Palestine - the current situation
	1. The European perspective
	2. The Israeli perspective
	3. The Multilaterals: The United Nations perspective
1 p.m. - 2.30 p.m.	Lunch break
2.30 p.m. - 6 p.m.	Workshops
	Workshop I: Palestinian national and human rights
	Workshop II: Palestinian development

Tuesday, 24 August

8.30 a.m. - 9.30 a.m.	Review of workshop reports
9.30 a.m. - 11 a.m.	Special interest groups
11 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.	Presentation to the Plenary of workshop reports and ECCP future strategy
12.30 p.m. - 2.30 p.m.	Lunch break
2.30 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.	ECCP election - open to participant European NGOs only
3.30 p.m. - 5 p.m.	Adoption of Final Declaration
5 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.	Closing ceremony

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2. TENTH UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
Geneva or Vienna
25-27 August 1993

Theme: Renewing the United Nations NGO commitment to Palestinian national and human rights

Provisional programme

Wednesday, 25 August

8 a.m. - 9.30 a.m.	Registration
9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.	Opening session
	Statements by:
	Representative of the Secretary-General
	Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
	Representative of Palestine
	Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP)
	Film (20 minute update on life in occupied Palestinian territories) - Al Quds Television
12.30 p.m. - 2.30 p.m.	Lunch
2.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.	Plenary I: Political update: obstacles to peace

Thursday, 26 August

9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.	Plenary II: Urgent quest for independence: protection and end of occupation
12.30 p.m. - 2.30 p.m.	Lunch
2.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.	Plenary III: Back to the future - a decade of United Nations/NGO networking

Friday, 27 August

9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.	Plenary IV: NGO forum: Who is doing what?
12.30 p.m. - 2.30 p.m.	Lunch

2.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m. Plenary V: Future strategies and the role of NGOs

Final Reports, Recommendations and Plan of Action

Announcement of ICCP selection results (1993-95)

Closing session

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B. Information received from NGOs

In the course of April, the following information was received by the Division for Palestinian Rights:

1. Israel and Palestine Political Report, available from: Magelan and Association Mashdek Developpement ISSN 0294 1341, Boite Postale 130, 75463 Paris CEDEX 10, France.

2. The Other Front, weekly bulletin on developments in Israeli society, available from: The Alternative Information Centre, P.O. Box 24278, Jerusalem.

3. The Other Israel, newsletter of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, available from: P.O. Box 2542, Holon, Israel 58125.

4. Briefing, publication of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, available from: 21, Collingham Road, London SW5 ONU, United Kingdom.

5. Middle East International, biweekly publication, available from: P.O. Box 53365, Temple Heights Station, Washington, D.C. 20009, United States of America.

6. The Yale Journal of International Law, Winter 1993 issue, concerning "Legal Decision-Making During the Palestinian Intifada". Available from: College of Law, 280 Boyd Law Building, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1113, United States of America.

7. ADC Times, publication of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. Available from: 4201 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20008, United States of America.

8. The Middle East, monthly publication available from: IC Publications Ltd., 7 Coldbath Square, London ECIR 4LQ, United Kingdom.

9. Samed Palestinian Prison Voices, publication of Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners, available from: P.O. Box 19543, Jerusalem.

10. Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, available from: The American Educational Trust, P.O. Box 53062, Washington, D.C. 20009, United States of America.

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